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The Canons of Literary Criticism

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of the Requirements for the Degree of M. A. in the University of California.

FRANCIS R. MORRISON.

APRIL, 1901.

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THE CANONS OF LITERARY CRITICISM.

A REVIEW OF W. BASIL WORSFOLD'S

"JUDGMENT IN LITERATURE."

This is an excellent little book. In about ninety small pages Mr. Worsfold endeavors to give an account of literary criticism and of the principles on which it is based. The first chapter is devoted to a review of the arts in general. Following Aristotle, these are divided into "Fine Arts" and "Mechanical Arts." The Fine Arts are classified in two ways. They are divided into "Arts of the Eye" and "Arts of the Ear," according as they make their appeal to the sense of sight or to that of hearing. Or they may be classified by reference to their material basis; on this principle Hegel places Architecture lowest, and Poetry highest, in order of dignity. The student receives no hint that Hegel's classification has ever been dissented from, or that any other arrangement has ever been proposed. Much might be said on this question of the classification of the Arts, yet some sketch, however brief, should have been given the reader. We will follow Mr. Worsfold's example and pass over this thorny question. We have then a definition of Art as being "the presentation of the real in its mental aspect." This must be read in connection with Cousin's definition of idealisation quoted subsequently. The author tests this definition of Art by considering each of the Fine Arts separately, and how each one affects the mind of the percipient, not only by its material medium, but by its "symbolic" effect. The only remark we have to make on this chapter, otherwise a model of condensation, is that the comparison made of the principles of criticism with those of morality strikes us as inept, especially where terseness is sought.

With Chapter II we approach that art with which our author's branch of criticism deals—Literature. While the other arts employ representations of the objective aspect of reality to assist in the presentation of the mental aspect, Literature (with the exception of the element of musical sound) does not need this assistance, being concerned solely with the subjective outlook upon the world. Mr. Worsfold gives us this definition of Literature: "Literature, in the widest sense, "is the record of the impressions made by external realities of "every kind upon great men, and of the reflections which these "men have made upon them." "Literature," he goes on to say, "is the brain of humanity," preserving the record of the past experience of the race, without which the life of the race would be degraded to a mere animal existence, and in whose absence its present conditions and circumstances cannot be understood.

We venture to think that this definition is too wide to be useful. We want a definition, not of "literature in its widest sence," but of the kind of literature to which criticism is applied. No doubt literature "in its widest sense" signifies everything that is written,—the record by letters or symbols of facts or thought. It is the form in which knowledge is registered,—the mould in which it is cast. Literature itself, therefore, we hold to be inferior to knowledge,—just as art is inferior to science. The great Napoleon, as is well known, ranked literature the higher. But though a genius in war, the Corsican was anything but a genius in letters. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam.* Knowledge must be acquired before it is written, and the only use of books is to serve as a storehouse in which the treasures of the intellect may be safely stored and conveniently found. Some definition of Literature in its narrower sense must be attempted. We have to distinguish between books whose value lies in the facts they contain, and books whose value consists not so much in the facts, as in the manner in which these facts are presented to us. The distinction, that is, is one between matter and form,—between, say, a census return and a sonnet. The main division of Literature is based on this distinction,—the division into what Mr. Worsfold terms "literature simply so-called," and "creative literature." Crea-

tive literature, wherein the writer adds the work of his own mind to the facts which he presents, employs mainly the method of art, not the method of science. Therefore, the artist is here the ideal critic. Although Mr. Worsfold has given us a definition of literature, he has not attempted a more specific definition of "creative literature." This is the more strange inasmuch as this is precisely the kind of literature—what the French felicitously call "belles lettres"—with regard to which criticism has grown up and has formulated its rules. It is generally considered conducive to clearness that we should know exactly what it is we are discussing. The author contents himself with telling us that modern criticism has now acquired three essential tests,—truth, symmetry, and the appeal to the imagination, corresponding respectively to the three dominant aspects of creative literature,—matter, manner, and capacity to produce pleasure. It is to be supposed, then, that any writing which satisfies these three tests is entitled to the name "creative literature."

Le us see what others have said. Mr. John Morley means by literature "not merely words and form, philology and "style, but the contents of important writings in their relation "to human thought and feeling, and the leading facts of "human life and society." Cardinal Manning understands by literature "the intellectual product of cultivated nations." Matthew Arnold tells us that "all knowledge that reaches "us through books is literature." Cardinal Newman writes, "by letters or literature is meant the expression of thought in "language, where by thought I mean the ideas, feelings, views, "reasonings, and other operations of the human mind." Mr. Pater speaks of it as "the representation * * * of a specific "personality in its preference, its volition and power. Such is "the matter of imaginative or artistic literature—this tran-"script, not of mere fact, but of fact in its infinite variety, as "modified by human preference in all its infinitely varied "forms." Mr. Gosse defines literature as "the most perfect "utterance of the ripest thought by the ~~first~~ minds." finest

However, to definitions of literature, in both of the divisions made by Mr. Worsfold, there is no end. Assuming the validity of our "three tests," then, let us go on to Chapter III,

in which we have an account of ancient criticism. We feel grateful to our author for preserving the historical method, even in so brief an outline of a great subject as this. There is nowadays far too strong a disposition to regard everything as beginning with the nineteenth century, or at earliest with 1776. The ancients may have been young in science, but they were old in experience of human nature. However true it may be that in science, where the record of progress is of secondary consequence, nearly every work that has appeared before 1859 is antiquated,—has been relegated from the position of a commanding authority to that of a venerable landmark,—in works of creative literature and the accompanying growth of criticism it is otherwise. Historical continuity and development must never be lost sight of. It is impossible to understand the present, much less to attempt to forecast the future, without a knowledge of the past. The so-called divisions of history are matters of convenience. Who can tell us precisely where "Ancient History" ends and "Mediaeval History" begins. Or at what exact date "Modern History" commences? One of the most flagrant instances of a disregard of historical continuity in the exposition of a literary subject is that of Hartmann. Not only does he consider the contributions of the ancients to the subject of Aesthetics as of no moment, but declares that Aristotle's "Poetics" has "an undeserved reputation"! Now we certainly are no advocates of "ancestor-worship," but not only is it right to remember that without the labors of our predecessors we should not be where we are to-day, but modern critical writings simply cannot be understood without a knowledge of the "Poetics"—just as ancient philosophy (which also Hartman despises) was a necessary and inevitable precursor of modern thought.

Mr. Worsfold very properly goes back to Plato and to Aristotle—"*il gran maestro di color ~~the~~ sanno.*" Indeed, it would be difficult to find a clearer account of the critical work of the two great thinkers of antiquity, of the special contribution of each to the subject, and how one was corrective of and complementary to the other, in such wonderfully brief space.

Mr. Freeman has dilated upon the value of the comparative

method,—one of the great gifts of the nineteenth century. The usefulness of that method, as visible in literature as in other branches, would be much curtailed if its range in time were limited to the present age. When we reflect that there is nothing in our modern world of the mental and spiritual that cannot be traced back to old Greek days, we see the importance of studying and understanding the work of those Ionian teachers of humanity. In every system of culture amongst white men—in every scheme of education that is not sadly cut short by the stern decree of poverty—Greek culture is the foundation stone.

The work of the other ancient writers, Roman as well as Greek, and of the Alexandrian school, is dismissed in a very few words, on the ground that the criticism of Plato and of Aristotle expresses all that is best in the critical thought of the ancient world. In so doing, our author has undoubtedly committed a grave mistake. It was to Quintilian and Longinus, rather than to Cicero and Aristotle, that many of our earlier English critics turned for guidance. Few readers of Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" recall the fact that many of the Doctor's judgments are an imitation of Quintilian's terse, epigrammatic and somewhat superficial appreciations of the Greek and Roman authors.

How Mr. Worsfold can assert that Plato and Aristotle have given expression to all that is best in the criticism of the ancient world passes our comprehension. To mention only one point: not a word of the "sublime" is to be found in either of these "great twin brethren." The doctrine of the "sublime," of so much importance in modern times, does not make its appearance before Longinus and Plotinus. And Quintilian is important to us from the extent to which he influenced the eighteenth century.

Coming to modern criticism, in Chapter IV, after a brief reference to French literature and its deference to what were thought to be Aristotle's rules, Mr. Worsfold considers Addison's criticism of Milton's "Paradise Lost," which appeared in the "Spectator." We may remark in passing that Addison's name is not even mentioned in Mr. Bosanquet's large work on the "History of Aesthetic"; though dealing with a

wider subject, some reference to the first of the purely literary critics among our great English writers should certainly appear. However, Mr. Bosanquet tells us that the "critical" movement (understanding by that word "the whole detailed work of reflective thought in the exploration and appreciation of particular beautiful things") extends in England from Sidney to Burke (1756), Hogarth (1753), and Reynolds (1758-9). We thank Mr. Worsfold for restoring Addison to his proper place. Addison, however, was anticipated by Dryden, and indeed both by Bacon, as Prof. Gayley points out.*

We think, though, that a word of commendation was due to Hurd, as one of the best critics of the eighteenth century. The papers in the "Spectator" upon Milton's epic do not, however, contain Addison's great contribution to the art of criticism. They are useful rather as showing the inadequacy of the Aristotelian rules when applied to a work of creative literature. It is in the "Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination" that Addison's great achievement in criticism is to be found. The nature of the great advance made by our Augustan writer may be thus described. By applying the then new psychological doctrine of the association of ideas, Addison notices that works of art, whether statue, painting or creative literature, work upon the mind of the spectator in a different way from the reality, and he finds that they do this by calling up images more rapidly and vividly in the mind of the percipient. Hence he concludes that the characteristic merit of such works can be best measured by the possession of this quality of appealing to the imagination. He points out that it is the sense of sight which provides the mind in the first instance with the "images" subsequently reproduced in thought,—which furnishes the imagination with its ideas. He divides the pleasures of the imagination into two kinds,—primary and secondary,—the first produced by the works of nature, the second by works of art. It is the secondary pleasures with which art and literature are concerned: and these are caused

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*"Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism"—Gayley and Scott: Boston; Ginn & Co., 1899. This work, a compilation of vast industry, laboriously arranged and classified, is replete with information and suggestive hints. It should be on the table of every student of literature.

not by real objects (as in the case of the primary pleasures), but by the representations of these pleasures. These representations may be produced by "arts of the eye" (architecture, sculpture and painting), and "arts of the ear" (music and creative literature). In all cases alike he traces the secondary pleasures of the imagination to "that action of the mind which "compares the ideas arising from the original objects with the "ideas we receive from the statue, picture, description, or "sound that represents them." In creative literature, where the ideas are "raised by words," the part played by the imagination is twofold. In the first place, there is the working of the imagination in the mind of the poet. In the second, there is the characteristic power possessed by creative literature through its "well chosen words" to appeal to the imagination of the hearer or reader.

Here, then, we have a criterion which can be applied to all forms of creative literature,—"Does it affect the imagination?" It is this application of psychology to the study of literature which characterizes modern criticism, and all subsequent critics have followed the path first marked out by Addison.

This is all very largely true. Yet Mr. Worsfold must not exaggerate. He seems to have his favorites, both among the ancients and the moderns. Just as he exalts Plato and Aristotle and slights Longinus and Quintilian, so he magnifies Addison. We think that Elizabethan scholars could have reminded him that "phantasy" or "wit" had been assigned as the main faculty in poesy long before. Is it not the Prince of Poets who tells us, in a passage too often quoted to quote again, that it is the "imagination" that "bodies forth the forms "of things unknown"? Has not Dryden, too, repeatedly emphasized the importance of idealization?

Chapter V, entitled "How Creative Literature Appeals to the Imagination," seems to us singularly inadequate. Indeed, in a booklet marked by such extreme condensation, it is a question whether such a chapter was needed. But if the appeal made by creative literature to the imagination had to be explained and illustrated, there can be no question at all that it should have been done fully and adequately. Mr. Worsfold contents himself with a reference to the "Laocoon" of Lessing

(1776), to Cousin's lectures, "Du Vrai, du Beau, et du Bien," delivered in 1818, and to a quotation of half a dozen lines from Mr. Meredith. Not one word of Kant, or Schiller and Goethe, of Schopenhauer (whose opinion, that associated ideas have no place in strict aesthetic judgment, is in direct opposition to Addison's view), or of Ruskin. Most of us would demur to accepting Cousin as a representative of "modern" psychology. Yet the French philosopher's account of the process of idealization cannot be omitted. It is, he says, the reproduction in the mind of natural beauty in the world of reality, not such as it was, but such as our imagination represents it to us. Thence arises a work of art.

In Chapter VI we come to "Contemporary Criticism." The instances given of the curious insensibility of great writers to the beauty and power of other great writers are certainly very striking. They may be paralleled by the opinions of the great masters in the other arts concerning their artistic brethren. We believe that it was Weber who said of Beethoven, when the latter had produced one of the immortal symphonies, that the composer was now quite ready for the asylum. Wagner called Verdi the "barbarian." The only explanation we can proffer of such phenomena is that a man of genius, owing to the very strength of his own mental endowment in some particular art, is by that very individuality the more disqualified, or rather, disabled from doing justice to others similarly endowed with himself. A certain catholicity of mind is as necessary to a true and impartial critic as freedom from illiteracy. Thus the ordinary man of culture, with no one faculty abnormally developed, possessed of, but not by, an artistic spirit, is more likely to do justice to the highly gifted artist than a brother artist.

Mr. Worsfold informs us that it is in the critical writings of Matthew Arnold that we find the highest example of contemporary English criticism. We venture to think that this is a matter of opinion, and that our author shows traces again of "favoritism." He arranges Arnold's achievements under three main heads. In the first place, Arnold "has emphasized " and defined the close connection between the author and the " age in which he lives. * *" Really! Has Mr. Worsfold

ever read a certain work entitled "A History of Civilization," by Henry Thomas Buckle? When we remember that this brilliant fragment appeared in 1859 and 1861, and produced an immense sensation; and when we furthermore recall the fact that Arnold's "Essays in Criticism" date from 1862,—it is not difficult to see where Arnold found his inspiration.* We really cannot share Mr. Worsfold's admiration for a writer who tells us nothing that we did not know before.

In the second place, Arnold "has broadly characterized the "philosophic aspect of all poetic representations of reality by "the luminous expression that Poetry is a 'criticism of life.'" It has always struck us as strange that this attempted definition of poetry has found so wide an acceptance. Mr. Worsfold tells us that Arnold's phase, "criticism of life," is a luminous expression. Luminous it may be as descriptive of certain classes of poetry; a definition of "Poetry" it most certainly is not. That can hardly be called a definition which does not cover all possible cases. As a matter of fact, Arnold's "definition" has simply no meaning as applied to two great classes of poetry,—"Lyric" and "Fanciful." What "criticism of life" is to be found, e. g., in Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark," or in "The Cloud"? What "ideal standard of life" and "interpretative power" can we find in, say, the "Rape of the Lock"? Now, we certainly have as little wish to seem to detract from Arnold's high position as a writer, as we have to speak disrespectfully of the equator. We admire his writings and his academic serenity, which contrast pleasantly with the blatant incapacity of so many criticasters of our time. But let praise be discreet and according to knowledge.

Now, one of the most marked characteristics of Mr. Matthew Arnold is his utter impenetrability to natural science. Not content with claiming for poetry a great interpretative power—which few would deny—he asserts that, as it appeals

* The growth of opinion on this question presents a long development closely resembling that on the doctrine of evolution itself. Just as it is possible to make a long list of those who "anticipated" Darwin, so among the precursors of Buckle we may see, as far back as "The Advancement of Learning" (1605), the germ of the same thought. We quote Buckle, not only as one of the latest and most gifted writers on the subject, but also for the coincidence of dates,—though Arnold had doubtless met the same idea in Hegel.

to the whole man, to the emotions and feelings as well as to the reason, it is superior to science, which appeals only to the reason. It is, as Wordsworth has said, "the breath and "finer spirit of all knowledge." It is easy to see that this is but an echo of Aristotle's old dictum, that poetry has a wider truth and higher aim than history, inasmuch as poetry deals with the universal, history with the particular. We hold that all this, taken literally, is quite inaccurate. It is one thing to distinguish the method of poetry from the method of science; it is quite another thing to claim superiority for one over the other. It is doubly reprehensible when they are ranked in inverse order of importance. The scientific—the judicial—attitude of mind is the result of long and laborious evolution. Without it, we should be savages still. The imagination, on the contrary, is most active in races and minds still undeveloped. Is it not a grotesque perversion to enthrone the latter as highest, and leave to it the decision on the "real nature of things"? "The interpretations of science," Arnold blandly tells us, "do not give us this intimate sense of objects "as the interpretations of poetry give it; they appeal to "a limited faculty and not to the whole man. It is not "Linnaeus or Cavendish or Cuvier who gives us the true sense "of animals, or water, or plants, who seizes their secret for us, "who makes us participate in their life—it is Shakespeare, with his

'daffodils
'That come before the swallow dares, and take
'The winds of March with beauty;'

"it is Wordsworth, with his

'Voice . . . . heard
'In the spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
'Breaking the silence of the seas
'Among the farthest Hebrides;'

"it is Keats, with his

'Moving waters at their priest-like task
'Of cold ablution round earth's human shores;'

"it is Chateaubriand, with his '~~cô~~me indéterminée des forêts'; "it is Senancour, with his mountain birch-tree, 'cette écorce "'blanche, lisse et crevassée: cette tige agreste: ces branches

" 'qui s' inclinent vers la terre: la mobilité des feuilles, et tout
" 'cet abandon, simplicité de la nature, attitude de déserts."

It seems to us that in all talk of this kind—of which we have only too much—there is a confusion of two radically distinct things. In the exquisite passages quoted we feel a thrill of aesthetic pleasure: they recall vividly the happy hours when we saw the daffodils of spring, heard the flute-voiced cuckoo, and watched the dancing waters of the sea. But they do *not* give us knowledge. It is vain for Wordsworth to tell us that

> " One impulse from a vernal wood
> " May teach you more of man,
> " Of moral evil and of good,
> " Than all the sages can."

We need only ask ourselves, "Is this true?" Would Shakespeare's lines be any less lovely if the daffodil, instead of being a monocotyledonous plant of the genus Narcissus and Natural Order Amaryllideae, were a dicotyledonous plant? The "moving waters" of Keats's lines would, no doubt, be as beautiful if Cavendish had never lived,—as if, instead of being composed of a fluid whose chemical formula was at present $H\ ^{2}O$, they were waves of carbonic disulphide. These poetical descriptions only give the true sense of plant or animal or water to one *who already knows them* in their exact and formal histology and constitution. It is the scientist who should most enjoy poetry. Compare Tennyson's later poetry with his earlier—"Locksley Hall" and "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." We entirely agree with Mr. Kipling's "McAndrews." The passages quoted by Arnold convey ideas of the objects named, because they are recognized from our previous knowledge of them. The birch is not the only tree which has the characteristics noted by Senancour: no one who did not already know the tree could form any idea of the birch from such a "description" as that given. Yet this, forsooth, is to give us "the real sense of things"! Senancour's description is about as valuable as that in the example given by the botanist Lindley, which we quote herewith: " 'The leaves are about
" 'four inches long, narrow, dark green, smooth on the surface,
" 'plain at the edge. The flowers grow in tufts, about ten
" 'together, and are straw-colored; they are small, downy, and

tinct things apart? "Beauty is symbolic, not imitative, and "therefore goes behind the forms of morality, which is co-ordi- "nate with it, to that soul of things which art and morality "render, each in its own way." The beautiful gives us an aesthetic thrill. Let us be content with that, and not proceed to invoke alien standards of judgment, and to enquire whether it meets the demands of morality or even of science.

We are convinced that art, *qua* art, has nothing to do with morality. Art would rather have a love-song from Burns in his cups than all the pious effusions of Tate and Brady,—would prefer "Tam O'Shanter" to

> "How blest the man who ne'er consents
> "By ill advice to walk."

The direct inculcation of morals has always been a failure. Moreover, it is not the function of art. Shakespeare never preaches: yet there is not one of his plays wherein the wrong is not condemned, and the good works out its own reward of becoming better.

We cannot agree with our author when he says (p. 56) that "obedience to the laws of art is not alone sufficient to produce "that sense of delight in the ideal representation of nature "and human life which a work of art must produce, if it is to "be accepted by humanity." Indeed, Mr. Worsfold does not seem to hold strongly to any conviction on this matter himself. He states the conflicting theories of Ruskin and Swinburne, and inclines to the opinion that each is partly right. We are reminded of the immortal judgment of Sir Roger de Coverley —also on a matter of art—that no doubt the picture would have been better if the artist had taken more pains.

How can it be seriously maintained that the "faculty of taste," which means "the general sense of mankind" (!) is the true test of excellence in art, after the examples given on page 55? If the cultured differ, how can "the public in general" be expected to decide aright? Is the "vox populi" to be here, as in politics, the "vox Dei"? In the multitude of counsellors there may be safety,—wisdom is another matter. Have not many thoughtful men held that there is a very real peril to the supremacy of the world-classics arising from uneducated opin-

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ion? Democracy in the political world we must have, no doubt; but culture is not democratic, and do what we will, we can never make it so. There will always be an aristocracy of intellect. Has any more amusing exhibition ever been afforded us than in the exercise, so common a few years ago, of drawing up lists of "the best one hundred books"?

Our author asserts (p. 60) that the artist "can never be, by "the nature of things, so independent of the mass of mankind "as to make artistic excellence his sole object." Whilst not professing to understand what may be denoted by "the nature of things," we certainly dissent from this dogma. In many instances, the artist *has* worked "independently of the mass of mankind." He has had to educate the mass of mankind to see with his eyes,—to hear with his ears. Nay, sometimes even the cultured minority are unable to follow the seer, and the great artist lives and works entirely alone.

Mr. Worsfold must be well aware that a large and influential school of "orthodox" thought will refuse to accept his definition of morality as being (p. 67) "the observance of a code of social laws," or as "the aggregate experience of a given society." We find no particular fault with it ourselves. But if *this* is the kind of morality to which art is to be subservient, alas for art! We think at once of the smug morality of certain classes, so amusingly exemplified in the story of the pious grocer who one night, when closing time came, called out to his apprentice, "John, have you sanded the sugar"? "Yes, sir." "And watered the milk"? "Yes, sir." "Then put up the shutters and come in to prayers." But this "morality" is found in classes the most opposed. A pope once ordered certain nude statues in the Vatican to be draped. Puritans shuddered at the ungodliness of stage-plays. Both pope and puritan failed to understand what art was, and accordingly hated it. It is only too evident that morality cannot be held to be an ultimate criterion in art.

If morality be an essential attribute of art, it should be found in all the manifestations of art. If it be not so found, it is no part of a definition of art. If this be granted, what morality can be found, e. g., in architecture? The answer may be returned that architecture is not—according to Hartmann

—to be considered as a fine art. Accepting this,—though the majority of art critics would, we think, refuse to accept such an exclusion,—we would ask, where is the moral element in music? Is a hymn tune moral and a ballad immoral? Is such doggerel as

> "On the young lion shall He go
> "And on the dragon tread"

to be regarded as pious, and "Ye Banks and Braes" to be adjudged pernicious? As a simple matter of fact, the vast majority of hymns are beneath contempt, whether from the point of view of literature or music. The words are only saved from scorn by the nature of their subject-matter, and the music is an affliction to the cultivated ear. "Ein 'Feste Burg" is a fine composition: so is the music in the garden scene in "Faust." But one is neither more nor less moral than the other. We forget who it was that said, in defense of an adaptation of music written for other aims—may the Muses forgive him!—that he didn't see why the devil should have all the good tunes. The devil has *none* of them! In short, is there any meaning in the phrase, "immoral music"? Of course, the unfortunate art can be made to grovel as well as to soar. But this is the difference not between moral and immoral, but between good and bad music. It is a matter for the artist, not for the moralist. As Hirn* says: "It is only from the standpoint of a purely he-"donic system of ethics that music or any other art, can be "said to exercise an immediate moral influence."

In Chapter VII, Mr. Worsfold considers the exercise of judgment in literature. The rest of the book has been a preparation for this chapter, which deals with the question of most importance to critics, and is the longest in the book. We are told that the contemporary critic, having been educated by the past, now concerns himself in seeking to *interpret* works of established reputation, and in the case of new works, to give a tentative judgment, based on the application of such tests as "truth, symmetry and idealization." By truth, we are to understand the essential correspondence between the body of in-

*"The origins of Art"—Yrgo Hirn; London; Macmillan & Co. 1900. See p. 108.

formation which the work conveys to our minds, and the external realities or facts of life, of which it treats. This seems to be based on the definition of truth given by Mr. Herbert Spencer ("First Principles"),—"Truth is but the exact correspond-" ence of subjective relations with objective relations." Truth is the final test of merit in literature. But it is explained to us that truth is of different kinds, and that in literature we need only "essential truth." That is to say, the nature of the correspondence between the matter of the book and the reality to which it refers will vary in the different forms of literature. There is the "truth" of the philosopher and historian, of the essayist and the traveller. There is also the "truth of idea" found in creative literature, and in all art. This last kind of truth, we are told, is "in a certain sense" superior to the truth of history or of any mere transcript from reality." We then have the usual quotation from Aristotle, backed by Wordsworth's paraphrase thereof. We have already expressed our opinion that there is here a confusion, and need not recur to the argument.

By the second test, symmetry, we are to understand the adaptation of the external qualities of the given work to the special purpose which it is intended to achieve. In other words, there must be a skillful "composition," or right selection and right disposition of materials. As applied to literature as a whole, this means that the *form* of the work (prose or verse, narrative or dialogue) should be suitable to the subject-matter. We cannot refrain, in passing, from noticing a characteristic touch by which Mr. Worsfold betrays his sympathies with the purely literary craft, and his coldness towards more exact pursuits. He remarks (p. 68) that "*even* a manual of history or science requires to be written with a certain regard for arrangement." (The italics are ours.) The author evidently like the law, "*de minimis non curat.*" Science deals with classifications; and in a manual, more perhaps than elsewhere, "symmetry" is the greatest of needs. However, let us proceed. As applied to creative literature, symmetry enjoins not merely that the *form* must be suitable, but that the limitations imposed by the medium, to-wit, word-symbols, be respected. As it is only works possessing symmetry, we are told, that can

appeal to the imagination, this dominant artistic quality becomes a test.

Thirdly, there is the principle of idealization. This principle applies only to creative literature, that is to say, to such works of literature as are also works of art. It requires not merely that the mental aspect of reality should be presented by the author, but that a selection from this mental aspect of reality should first be made, and that the selection so made should exclude such matter as affects unpleasantly the aesthetic consciousness of the reader. Mr. Worsfold makes some brief but excellent remarks on the subject of realism, upon which so much has been written. He says : "No work of "creative literature can be 'realistic' in the sense that the au- "thor has reproduced reality and not the mental aspect of "reality; for if the author had attempted to do this his com- "position would not be a work of creative literature at all." If used as a term of reproach, the epithet would mean that the work does not "give pleasure," owing to lack of idealization. Realism, in the acquired and narrower sense of the presentation of subjects, or aspects of subjects, repugnant to the moral sense, is sometimes defended on the ground of its superior truth,—adult art, it is said, should present things as they really are. But this is not the kind of truth which a work of art can yield. The most prominent application of the principle of idealization is the doctrine of "poetic justice," according to which a work of creative literature—with the sole exception of the tragedy—should end happily. In the illustrative passage which Mr. Worsfold quotes from the "Advancement of Learing," there is one of those misprints which are so annoyingly frequent in this little book. The sentence referred to (p. 73) should run, in part, "therefore poesy *endueth* them with more rareness," etc.

The idealizing process is, however, controlled in two ways by the principle of truth. The idealization must be consistently applied throughout; and it must be itself guided by that wide and yet exact knowledge of men and things which is expressed by the term "philosophy." Here, in this second condition, we are again brought face to face with the problem which we have already discussed. If, as Aristotle, Wordsworth and

M. Arnold,—and Mr. Worsfold,—tell us, this idealization is "superior to history," is "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge," replacing science by appealing to the whole man,—why the need of this control, of this appeal to a still higher power? We, too, appeal to a higher than either "knowledge" or "emotion," which must co-ordinate and direct those faculties. If Mr. Worsfold chooses to use the term, "philosophy," we will not quarrel with him, though it is not the word we should ourselves have selected. "A wide knowledge of men and things" does not appear to us a felicitous description of the scope of philosophy.

But even yet the critic is insufficiently equipped. We have learned that truth is the test which reveals excellence of matter, symmetry is the test which reveals excellence of manner, beauty is the test which reveals the due exercise of the power of idealization. How are we to apply these several tests to any given work? There is only one way—*comparison*. We must compare the work offered to us with the recognized masterpieces or "classics," in the same department of literature. Our minds thus become familiarized with the lofty tone and transcendent beauties revealed to us in these great works. It is thus that "taste" is formed. Literary taste, says Addison, "is " the faculty which discerns the beauties of an author with " pleasure and the imperfections with dislike. If a man would " know whether he is possessed of this faculty, I would have " him read over the celebrated works of antiquity, which have " stood the test of so many different ages and countries." To the same effect Arnold. We must fill our minds with the beauty and the music of masters—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton. By using our knowledge of their work as a "touchstone,"—or more correctly, as Mr. Dowden has pointed out, as a tuning-fork—we can decide on the general character of any new and unrecognized work.

Our author then gives us two examples of this comparison. Both are taken from prose-fiction,—one from "Adam Bede," the other from "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel." It is to be regretted that space could not have been found for a more adequate exhibition of the method, applied, too, in other departments of literature.

The eighth and last chapter of the book is devoted to a brief explanation of the "Forms of Literature," of the terms "Classical" and "Romantic," and to "Style." This is the only chapter in the work for which we have no word of praise. The attempt to deal with such subjects in a few jejune and scrappy paragraphs, stands self-condemned. No one likely to read the book will stand in need of being told what is meant by an epic, a lyric, an elegy, or a drama. It would have been better to have omitted this whole discussion of "Forms of Literature" which strikes us as alien to the topic of "Judgment in Literature."

One of the forms of literature noticed and defined by Mr. Worsfold is the essay. The description he gives of this form of writing is better than some others we have seen. We doubt, however, if the statement that the essay "treats a subject from a single point of view," is borne out by an appeal to our literary facts. Many of our best essays seem to us (perhaps mistakenly) to treat their subject from several points of view. The very name, "essay," suggests this. In our earlier literature, the word was written "assay," and we spoke of an "Assay of Studies." It was only in later days that the preposition was changed to "on." The writer takes his subject—be it from real life, or some abstract proposition—and turns it round and round,—looks at it now in this light, now in that,—handles it, so to speak, with finger-tips, and with no pretension to scientific thoroughness. He makes an "assay" of it, as opposed to an exhaustive analysis, which would lead rather to a "treatise." For the idea which we have seen advanced, that there is a "lyric" element in the essay, we fail to find any foundation. The personal element, of course, is conspicuous, from the nature of the case; but more than this is necessary to make a lyric. We have ever thought that, in the typical essay, there is a marked absence of the "emotional" appeal which characterizes the lyric.

No account is given of the origin of the Greek drama, or of the curiously different origin of English drama, although without this knowledge no intelligent criticism is possible.

The description of the "novel" is confused and confusing. "It is an imagined picture of a man and woman in the spring-

time of life, in which the love-interest is supreme." This is not, we think, a definition of the novel, but of a species of novel. We then get the "romance," the "allegory," and the "satire," all jumbled together: "In addition to these, there is a third class of novels, the novel of 'local colour.'" This paragraph should really be re-written. The allegory and the satire should not have been classed along with the novel. They are too distinct and important to be thus arranged. We doubt the right of the "satire" to come under the head of "Creative Literature" at all. Looking back over their literary genealogy, so to speak, from their classic origins to our own time,—from Juvenal to Johnson,—we cannot see any particular "appeal to the imagination." On the contrary, they are generally extremely matter of fact and sometimes disagreeably personal. Mr. Worsfold can find no room for an example of Dryden's satiric powers, or for Pope's lines on "Atticus."

It is rather startling to find the "Classical" and "Romantic" methods discussed in some thirty lines. A few words might have been added to show that the meaning attached to these two terms has not always been the same, but has varied from period to period. A brief historical retrospect would have shown how the two tendencies have prevailed at different times in the literature of England,—to say nothing of other countries.

The last paragraph in the book is given to the consideration of "the quality at once so apparent and so elusive, which is called style." Needless to say, such a subject can no more be properly treated in a paragraph than that of Romanticism and Classicism. Just because this element of literature is so apparent and so elusive, did it particularly need the help of examples. Hume says that criticism without examples is worthless. The young student needs examples: the mature reader can apply them for himself. We notice the usual misquotation of Buffon's words in defining style. What the French writer really said was, "*le style est de l' homme même.*" With all deference to Mr. Worsfold, we cannot accept as accurate his statement that "style does not consist in any quality "shown in the construction of sentences, or in the choice of "words, or even in the use or neglect of characteristic literary

"methods." If style is not shown in these very matters, wherein can we see it? How are we to perceive the "uncon-" scious expression of the writer's own temperament, training, or circumstances," wherein Mr. Worsfold asserts style exists? In every other art, the "style" of the artist is shown by the use he makes of the medium employed, be it marble, pigment or sound. Why, in literature alone, are we not to look for "style" to the medium employed,—to-wit, words?

We cannot refrain from attempting, however imperfectly, to supplement Mr. Worsfold's final paragraph, and give a few examples of one of those qualities which, we hold, make style. We shall not speak of that choice of words and construction of sentences, which Mr. Worsfold so summarily dismisses. We think a useful purpose will be served if we seek to draw attention to an element which our best prose shares with poetry, an element which may be called cadence or melodic rhythm. We shall confine ourselves to prose, though the temptation to rove into the field of verse is well nigh irresistible. In poetry, we expect to find this melody; it is commonly used and commonly recognized. But in prose, it is generally overlooked or neglected. Curiously enough, too, it is more often found in the writings of men who were not poets, than in the prose of great poets. It is in words as chosen for their contrasting sound,—in sentences arranged for their harmonious cadence,—that the quality we would speak of is to be found. It is not mere epigrammatic arrangement or terse sense, that yields what we are seeking. For example, take this passage from Macaulay's essay on Croker's Life of Johnson,—the paragraph beginning "Of the talents which ordinarily raise men to eminence as writers, Boswell had absolutely none," and ending "These quali-" ties, if he had been a man of sense and virtue, would scarcely " of themselves have sufficed to make him conspicuous; but " because he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have " made him immortal." It will probably be admitted that this is sufficiently smart writing. But it does not contain the element of which we are in search. The prose of Walter Savage Landor occasionally comes very near the attainment of this crowning perfection of prose, and yet—to our ear at least—seems to miss it. It is, we think, a product of developed prose,

and is hardly, therefore, to be found in our earlier literature. If we can trust our judgment, it begins to appear in Hooker and in Milton's prose, but is rare, even in the latter. Undoubtedly some examples can be culled of sentences in these authors and in Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, whose cadences fall upon the ear with the very enchantment of sound; but they are the exception, not the rule. Addison and Swift seem to have either been ignorant of, or to have neglected, word-melody. Probably the latter is the fact; for writers of that age were too much occupied in forming our "popular" or "democratic" prose, and in moulding it into easy and flexible forms. A little later we seem to hear it in the letters of Junius. He writes thus to the Duke of Grafton, in 1769: "The character "of the reputed ancestors of some men has made it possible "for their descendants to be vicious in the extreme without "being degenerate. Those of your grace, for instance, left no "distressing example of virtue even to their legitimate poster-"ity: and you may look back with pleasure to an illustrious "pedigree in which heraldry has not left a single good quality "upon record to insult or upbraid you." And again, referring to his Grace's connection with the University of Cambridge: "You will then have reason to be thankful, if you are permit-"ted to retire to that seat of learning, which, in contemplation "of the system of your life, the comparative purity of your "manners with those of their high steward, and a thousand "other recommending circumstances, has chosen you to en-"courage the growing virtue of their youth, and to preside "over their education. Whenever the spirit of distributing "prebends and bishopries shall have departed from you, you "will find that learned seminary perfectly recovered from the "delirium of an Installation, and, what in truth it ought to be, "once more a peaceful scene of slumber and thoughtless medi-"tation. The venerable tutors of the university will no longer "distress your modesty by proposing you for a pattern to their "pupils. The learned dulness of declamation will be silent; "and even the venal Muse, though happiest in fiction, will for-"get your virtues."

Dr. Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield and the Preface to his great Dictionary are too well known to quote. Gibbon

shared with Johnson in the attempt to revert to the older and longer style of sentence,—a reaction which, as against the spirit of the age, was bound to be shortlived. Many examples of melodious prose could be selected from the stately pages of the "Decline and Fall." Our next quotation, however, shall be from Beckford's "Vathek"—the description of the infernal Hall of Eblis: "In the midst of this immense hall a vast multi-
" tude was incessantly passing, who severally kept their right
" hands on their hearts, without once regarding anything
" around them. They had all the livid paleness of death.
" Their eyes, deep sunk in their sockets, resembled those phos-
" phoric meteors that glimmer by night in places of interment.
" Some stalked slowly on, absorbed in profound reverie; some,
" shrieking with agony, ran furiously about like tigers wound-
" ed with poisoned arrows; whilst others, grinding their teeth
" in rage, foamed along more frantic than the wildest maniac.
" They all avoided each other; and, though surrounded with
" a multitude that no one could number, each wandered at
" random, unheedful of the rest, as if alone on a desert where
" no foot had trodden."

It is not, however, till we reach the nineteenth century that this musical quality of prose diction becomes comparatively common. It is in the writings of De Quincey that we first find it in all its richness. Hackneyed though it now be, we would quote once again the celebrated passage in the "Dream Vision of the Infinite," from the essay on "Lord Rosse's Telescopes": " 'Angel, I will go no further. For the spirit of man
" 'aches under this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God's
" 'house. Let me lie down in the grave, that I may find rest
" 'from the persecutions of the Infinite; for end, I see, there is
" 'none.' And from all the listening stars that shone around
" issued one choral chant—'Even so it is: angel, thou knowest
" 'that it is: end there is none, that ever yet we heard of.'
" 'End is there none?' the angel solemnly demanded; and is
" 'this the sorrow that kills you?' But no voice answered,
" that he might answer himself. Then the angel threw up his
" glorious hands to the heaven of heavens, saying, 'End is
" 'there none to the universe of God? Lo! also there is no
" 'beginning.' "

Among subsequent authors, Newman, Carlyle, Ruskin, Pater, Symonds, may be mentioned as writers of musical prose. We will venture to adduce one example from the "University Sermons" of the great English cardinal: "Is it possible that " that inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich " yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so " majestic, should be a mere sound, which is gone and perishes? " Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen " emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, " and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be " wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and " goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot " be. No; they have escaped from some higher sphere; they " are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of " created sound; they are echoes from our Home; they are the " voice of Angels, or the Magnificat of Saints, or the living " laws of Divine Governance, or the Divine Attributes; some- " thing are they besides themselves, which we cannot compass, " which we cannot utter,—though mortal man, and he perhaps " not otherwise distinguished above his fellows, has the gift " of eliciting them."

We would fain have added some more examples from writers who seem to deal with words as the musician deals with notes. But space forbids. The volumes of "Modern Painters" are as resonant with this verbal melody as an English woodland with the music of birds in spring. Indeed, there is an almost undue excess of picturesque and sonorous diction in the pages of Ruskin.

Returning to Mr. Worsfold's book, we would suggest that such a sentence as that on page 12, "he tells me the place " where it took place," comes with a bad grace from a writer on the art of writing. On page 63 the word "provisionary" for "provisional" strikes us as unusual. On page 79 "*égoism*" is not a French word. "To himself look upon" is not a pleasant way of dealing with your infinitives—at least in English, whatever may be the case in Greek and German. On page 55 is a statement which we would gladly think a misprint. " * * Southey and Wordsworth, now regarded as our most " spiritual poets." We admit the right of Wordsworth to the

epithet "spiritual," but Southey,—never! If any poet ever had feet of clay, it was Southey. If any Pegasus was without wings, it was the steed ridden by the author of "Thalaba" and the "Curse of Kehama."

In the world so far as we know it we can discern but three ultimates—matter, force, and mind. The change that has been wrought in criticism by increased knowledge of psychology has been similarly wrought in philosophy by the general advance of scientific knowledge. It is in vain that the "philosopher" tells us that his studies deal with abstractions,—with mind,—and hence cannot be affected by science, which deals with matter. Science is dealing more and more with forces: matter is rather the arena, so to say, in which force is exhibited. An example may make our meaning clearer. Locke asserts that the mind of the child is like a white tablet, on which we may write what we will.* Never was comparison more wide of the mark. We now know that the child's mind should rather be compared to a palimpsest, on which the ancestral experiences of his race are recorded in fainter and ever fainter script. On this ancient palimpsest the temporary possessor will leave his own mark, for good or for evil, and then in turn transmit it to his descendants. Our change of opinion is due, *pace* the philosopher, to science. And mind has not only developed, but is developing. The tastes, feelings, and perceptions of the modern man are not the same as those of the man of antiquity. To modern eyes, the newly erected Parthenon, glittering in its snowy whiteness of marble against the blue of a southern sky, would seem more beautiful than if tinged and tainted with color. To us, the touch of blue and of red would have seemed a profanation—reminding us of the suburban maisonettes of Paris. Yet we know that the classical

"—ere 'tis accustom'd unto sin,
"The mind white paper is, and will admit
"Of any lesson you will write in it."

Shakespeare, speaking of a child (K. John, II, 1):
"the hand of time
"Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume."

*This idea was current long before Locke's time. Washbourne, in his "Divine Poems," 12 mo., 1654,—

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Greeks, our masters in aesthetic, colored their statuary and architecture. The use of terms of color by the classical writers is so vague (Catullus, e. g., even speaking of "purpureos nives") that some scholars have doubted whether the feeling for color existed at all. Science tells us that the sense of color did not develop so soon or so rapidly as the sense of form; and in telling us this, she gives us the explanation. The age of the great painters did not come till centuries after the period of perfection in the plastic arts.

We see the same development in music. The human ear had to be slowly educated. The history of music shows the gradual introduction of one chord after another, previously interdicted on the ground of cacophony. Before the time of Glück, it was held a barbarism to unite the various bands,—string, brass, and wood-wind. Now, these bands are but sections of the orchestra. The present system of the tempered scale does not go back more than about a century and a half, to the time of Bach. Has not even a more rapid education of the public ear taken place in our own day with regard to the music of Wagner? It is not merely the individual who must be educated, but the generation and the race.

Looking at the chaos of opinion as to what constitutes "the beautiful," it is to be hoped that some man of genius will arise who will grasp the whole subject from the evolutionary point of view and place it on a scientific basis,—the only firm one. Science has already modified our religion and our philosophy; it will surely control and mould our ideas of aesthetic.

In literature, we have "matter" represented by language, and "mind" by the writer. The writer is a complex product of many factors. Language is also a complex product. Language is an organism which has its vital laws. It represents the result of untold ages of development. The importance of "mere words" is often unduly depreciated. All truth and all error lie in propositions; and propositions consist of words. Words are the chief means of bridging the awful abyss between one mind and another. In our language, with its composite structure and its three great strata of Teutonic, Romance, and classical speech, the choice of words is more

important than in any other. Whether we write "janitor," or "porter," or "doorkeeper," may make a difference, not only in the style, but even in the meaning of our sentence. A writer in English, then, must needs have a large vocabulary. And the moment we begin to think of arranging our words in sentences, we find ourselves dealing with grammar. Now, grammar is a branch of logic. It is a series of mental operations. So that again we find ourselves in the region of mind.

In spite of all the rules of all the pedants, there is one golden rule which transcends the rest,—"whatever sounds "good, is good." We believe that this applies almost as much to literature as to music, and is the ultimate test of excellence. There is an anecdote in Aulus Gellius of how V. Probus answered a too persistent asker of "why?"—"*aurem tuam interroga.*" A keen and correct ear is the most precious endowment of the critic,—though Mr. Worsfold has forgotten to say so. Your true critic is both born and made.

In considering such a subject as criticism, and the gradual formation of the ~~causes~~ canons that govern it, it is strange that Mr. Worsfold has not found space to touch upon what is yet a striking phenomenon. We allude to that law of periodicity that seems to govern the action of the human mind. A period of great activity in "creative" work seems to be uniformly followed by one of comparative quiescence. This action and reaction is apparent, we think, in the literature of every race that has produced a literature.

It is evident that this method of novement is inevitable. Following upon every great epoch of advance,—of positive construction,—there comes a time of pause, when the mind halts, to look around, and take stock, as it were, of its acquisitions. It is now that the critical faculty comes into play. By analysis of our gains, we make a further advance possible. It is usual, in histories of literature, to speak of such epochs of quiescence as being of inferior importance. In this, we think, a profound error is committed. This impulse of the human mind to analysis is irrepressible; and when temporarily overpowered by the creative impulse—by the irresistible desire of realizing expression—will assuredly reassert itself. It is during these periods of repose, of self-examination and reflection,

that the principles are reached which will largely govern progress during a constructive period. Thus each method in turn assists the other.

There is something almost awe-inspiring in contemplating such periods of history as the Periclean age of Athens or the Elizabethan age in England. In the great outburst of intellectual activity, which can be neither foretold nor explained, "the "old order changeth, yielding place to new." Old landmarks are swept away: old beliefs perish in the deluge of doubt. Chaos prevails. The sacred Vedas disappear. The dispensation of the past is over: the time has come for a new Avatâra. Soon Narâyana, upborne on the coils and overcanopied by the heads of the serpent of infinity, again shows himself above the agitated world. With him he bears the resplendent lotus of truth, whose seeds he entrusts to those wise rishis who, recognizing in the new cosmos but a palingenesia, calmly devote themselves to the fulfilment of the divine intentions. Light and law reign again; again humanity presses on, till the potentialities of the present are exhausted, and another upheaval comes. So it has ever been in the past—so it will ever be in the future.

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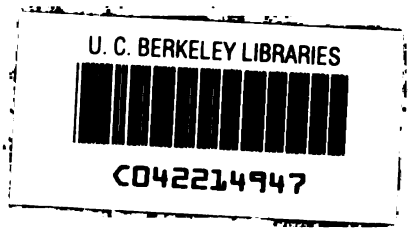

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